

NEWS RELEASE

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SURVEILLANCE INCREASED FOR EXOTIC NEWCASTLE DISEASE IN BIRDS

HONOLULU — The state veterinarian, James Foppoli, is asking all veterinarians and bird owners; including poultry producers, pet owners and others in the pet trade, to observe their birds for signs of Exotic Newcastle Disease (END). The avian disease is highly contagious and nearly 100 percent fatal to unvaccinated poultry. The disease does not pose a serious threat to human health, but may cause eye irritation to those working directly with infected birds.

To keep the END virus from becoming established in Hawaii, HDOA has prohibited the importation of birds from 10 southern California counties since the disease was discovered this past Fall, as well as importation of chickens and turkeys from the entire state of California. A federal quarantine zone which prohibits the movement of birds now covers about 57,000 square miles and includes much of southern California including the counties of Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernadino, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Imperial and Orange. Since the disease was discovered in southern California last fall, it has cost millions of dollars and adversely impacted much of the areas poultry industry. A more recent discovery of the disease in a backyard chicken flock in Nevada has also elevated concern about the spread of this devastating bird disease.

"Fortunately, the import restrictions on birds that the department imposed in September 2002 to keep the West Nile virus from entering the state is also helping to keep out Exotic Newcastle Disease," said Sandra Lee Kunimoto, chairperson for HDOA. "Through this process, department has been able to monitor and inspect every bird shipment that comes to Hawaii."

With the assistance of the U.S. Postal Service, the department imposed an embargo last September that prohibits shipments of birds to Hawaii through the U.S. Mail. Previously, birds shipped through the mail were able to bypass permit requirements and avoid inspection. Since WNV emergency rules were established, all bird importers must apply for import permits, have their shipments inspected upon arrival at the Honolulu International Airport, and be accompanied by a certificate of veterinary inspection issued by an accredited veterinarian. Bird shipments lacking the required documentation are rejected and returned to the point of origin.

Clinical signs of END can vary and mimic other diseases, but include

respiratory signs such as coughing and sneezing, listlessness, nervous signs such as circling and paralysis, high mortality, and decreased egg production. Birds may catch the virus through contact with infected birds or contaminated materials, such as the clothing or shoes of humans who have been exposed to infected birds. A death rate of almost 100 percent can occur in unvaccinated poultry flocks. The disease can also infect and kill vaccinated poultry.

"Pet birds and wild birds are also susceptible to the disease but to a lesser extent than poultry," said Foppoli. "Pet birds may become infected, recover and remain carriers of the virus."

Anyone with birds that show signs of the disease suggestive of END or possessing birds that may have been transported from the quarantine zones within California after October 1, 2002, or Nevada since January 15, 2003, is asked to contact the Hawaii Department of Agriculture at 837-8092.

Should END make its way to Hawaii, it could devastate local egg producers that generate revenues of more than \$9 million annually and supplies about 50 percent of the eggs sold in Hawaii and would also severely effect the broiler industry.

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